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Communications

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Corie Weathers ('99) Named National Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Just two months after she was named the Armed Forces Insurance (AFI) 2015 Army Spouse of the Year, a Gardner-Webb alumna has been recognized as the overall national winner. On May 8, Corie Weathers ('99) was chosen from among five other military branch nominees as the National AFI Military Spouse of the Year.

Weathers and her husband, Capt. Matthew Weathers, a U.S. Army Chaplain currently stationed at Fort Gordon in Augusta, Ga., met at Gardner-Webb. She earned a degree in counseling from GWU in 1999 and now uses her professional skills to help military families, particularly soldiers who are struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Now married for over 11 years, Weathers still remembers how difficult life became after Matthew's first deployment.

"My husband came home changed," Weathers recalled. "I was different, he was different, and we had to struggle through re-integration just like any other military family. I remember he had made this big batch of blueberry pancakes and he was so excited and I came downstairs and had to tell him that our son doesn't like blueberry pancakes anymore."

Those struggles, which they knew were so common among military families, prompted the couple to offer marriage retreats and online web-based marriage-strengthening curriculum. "Our passion has always been to strengthen military marriages through marriage retreats, teaching, and events," Weathers shared. "We developed a website called Insight Care and Connection that provides free marriage material that we have professionally created and collected, blogs for soldiers and spouses, and vetted organizations that are readily available to serve them." They also co-wrote curriculum that couples can work through together even if separated by the distance of a deployment.

Since arriving at Fort Gordon, Weathers has also encountered a variety of concerning issues faced by teens. "In order to deal with the growing trends and stress of bullying, cyber-bullying, cutting or self-harm, promiscuous behavior, and self-esteem, I created a successful outpatient program for teen girls that includes individual therapy, family therapy, and group therapy," she reflected. "As a military spouse that frequently moves, I

have become more comfortable developing programs that are needed within the community I am planted in, and being prepared to hand it off to the next person who is meant to continue it.”

Other AFI Military Spouse of the Year Branch Winners included: Jana Kingery (Beale AFB, Calif.) representing the Air Force; Stacey Benson (Boston, Mass.) representing the Coast Guard; Julia Kysela (Pennsylvania) for National Guard; Antonia Wilber (Santa Rita, Guam) for the Navy; and Nicole Spaid (Jacksonville, N.C.) for the Marine Corps.

A national vote took place on March 4, which was followed by the official announcement that Weathers was the overall winner at a special ceremony on May 8, which is also National Military Spouse Appreciation Day. The 2015 Armed Forces Insurance Military Spouse of the Year (MSOY) was selected based on the highest combined score derived from the popular vote, the MSOY Panel, and the Advisory Board.

Each year, AFI honors the home-front sacrifices of military spouses while their soldiers are in active service. According to Garry L. Parks, Lieutenant General, USMC (Ret), Chairman of AFI, the critical role of these military spouses often goes unnoticed. “We applaud every military spouse, the unsung heroes who maintain the home-front during lengthy deployments, selflessly give back to their communities through volunteer work, and provide moral support for their loved ones serving both at home and in harm’s way,” Parks said. “On behalf of Armed Forces Insurance, we salute each of you!”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).